



Senior

Moments^{2 3}

*The quarterly newsletter
of Bookham & District
u3a*

Issue 83

November

2024

Report from the Chair

As you read this, I will have started the second half of my two-year tenure as Chair of Bookham & District u3a. At the AGM on 1 October the members elected Peter Osborne as Treasurer, succeeding Chris Pullan who has held the position for 16 years, and Pat Mander as Secretary, taking over from Gillian Arnold who had done a commendable stint of 10 years on the Committee. My sincere thanks go to Chris and Gillian for their service.

All of the other Committee members agreed to continue in place and were duly elected. Also elected was Kay Angell who joins us as Social Secretary, a position that has been vacant for the past year. One of our newer members has agreed to explore supporting our Webmaster as her Assistant and this should provide some resilience as well as sharing quite a heavy load.

Following on from all of this good news, I have to revert to a tune I have been playing throughout my first year. We still have not had anyone come forward to fill the position of Vice Chair – without someone being in place to take over the Chair in the next year or two there is a considerable danger that the u3a may have to wind up. I volunteered having read a similar plea from my predecessor who found himself in the same predicament. Please contact me at chair@bookhamu3a.org.uk or speak to me at a monthly meeting if you would like to know more.

Besides this ongoing issue, things are looking up for Bookham & District

u3a. The finances are sound, as reported by the Treasurer, and new interest groups are being set up. Over 30 Songsters are exercising their vocal cords once a month and the first meeting of the Social Games group is scheduled for late October.

By the time you see this article, our Fun Quiz at Ye Olde Windsor Castle – which was “sold out” a week before the deadline – will have taken place, and the Theatre Group will have enjoyed their trip to see Come from away at The New Wimbledon Theatre. I am hopeful that we might arrange another quiz night early in the New Year and I know that ideas for the next theatre trip in the Spring are already being researched.

As well as the quiz, our new Social Secretary has arranged for The Rat Pack are Back, a group that has recently celebrated their 20th anniversary, to come and entertain us on Wednesday 23 April 2025. This is nearly six months away but I recommend you hold the date in your calendar. Thinking of calendars, the Painting Workshop Group has been so productive this year that Maurice Baker has put together two alternative 2025 calendars priced at only £8 each. See the website, or speak to Maurice, to learn more.

I am looking forward to an even better year in 2025 and I trust you will all continue to make the most of your membership of this great organisation.

Phil Brown



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The Committee 2024

<https://bookhamu3a.org.uk>

Editorial

This month we had our AGM where we said goodbye to two long serving members of the committee, Our Secretary Gillian Arnold left after her long service where she served most helpfully and efficiently over the years. Chris Pullan was treasurer for over 12 years, In both cases there were understudies in place but as you see we still have not understudy for our Chair and his term of office ends at the AGM October 2025.

There are still 2025 calendars available at £8 each.

There are some very interesting articles this time, I am particularly pleased with Chris Edwards' piece because I was looking to fill two pages and she said she had done a walk round Polesden Lacey and had a photo and from this small contribution I was able to make a two page spread! So if have an idea, no matter how small, there is the possibility it can be made into an interesting article to read.

Maurice Baker



Maurice Baker
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Cover photo a beech tree by Maurice Baker

Musings of a Bookham and District u3a Secretary

I joined Bookham and District u3a when I retired in 2012 and became a member of the Wine Appreciation group then led by Peter Hudson. Peter was the Chairman of Bookham u3a at the time and he persuaded me to join the committee in 2013 as the Minutes Secretary. Peter was succeeded by Neil Carter in 2014, and his wife Pippa decided it was time for her to retire as Secretary, having held the post for many years. I was persuaded to take on this task, though Pippa was a hard act to follow. After Neil as Chair came Lynn Farrell, Roger Mendham, Chris Middleton and now Phil Brown, so I have been in post for 10 years.

Roger introduced a more informal start to our monthly meetings – no more sitting on the stage in jackets and ties!

When I joined there was a waiting list of people wanting to become members of Bookham u3a. We were told off in no uncertain terms by the Third Age Trust who had received a letter of complaint from someone who had wished to transfer their membership, as they were moving to Bookham. The reason for the waiting list was in case too many members decided to attend a monthly meeting at the Old Barn Hall. We monitored

this for a few months and it became clear that this was not going to be an issue. So the waiting list was abolished and we almost doubled our membership over the next few years. Sheila Pomfret organised outings and holidays and Harold Reglar updated and revolutionised our website. Social events were well attended and enjoyed twice a year. Much of the information from the Third Age Trust came by mail but now everything is done by email which makes the secretary's job less arduous!

Covid and the lockdown affected our u3a. Luckily Zoom came into its own and we were able to hold monthly meetings and some groups in the comfort of our own homes. We even managed an AGM on Zoom! After lockdown it took a while for people to feel able to return to our meetings in the Barn Hall and membership numbers dropped, but they are going up again now - in part thanks to good advertising by our publicity officer. I would encourage any member to consider joining the Committee, I have enjoyed being involved in the running of our u3a and I know my successor will do an excellent job.

Gillian Arnold



Peter Brazier

As many of you know, we don't usually carry obituaries in Senior Moments, but over



the years we have always made exceptions for special members who have served Bookham u3a with particular distinction. In the past we have paid this honour to Peter Hudson, a past Chairman and John Dicker also a Chairman who led many groups with distinction and of course Sheila Pomfret who lead so many outings to all manner of places. We now have a less well known member, Peter Brazier, who not only was the second editor of our quarterly magazine but it was Peter who came up with the name Senior Moments, not, he told me, to the complete satisfaction of all the members. Many thought the title would imply that we were old fuddy duddies who were unsure about quite what they were at! Peter's journalistic expertise soon put an

end to that idea and he edited Senior Moments with distinction for 3 years at the beginning of this Century, but while his journalism could hardly be faulted, he had after all worked as a journalist for the Government in many parts of the world. Fortunately the previous editor, Ruth Blood, was on hand to help as he did have some difficulties with the computer and printing. I did say to him once at the Monday morning Painting Workshop where we used to meet, that he was a fine watercolour and pen sketching artist, and if he ever wanted to commit his memoirs to a book I would be happy to help him. But he said that was never likely to happen because he had signed the Official Secrets Act and therefore could divulge very little of interest. Nevertheless, he has left a legacy in the name of our magazine that will live as long as there is a Bookham u3a which is no mean feat for such a gifted gentleman who served this u3a so very well.

Maurice Baker

I was knocked over by a Spitfire travelling at 300 miles per hour!

During my National Service in the Royal Signals Regiment, I was detached to a Territorial Army camp site near Bude, in North Cornwall. This was an Ack-Ack (Anti-



Aircraft) Command Camp and Gun Range. After National Service, one had to spend three and a half years in the Territorial Service which included a fortnight's service in a training camp each year. The range was situated on the coastline on top of cliffs which were very high up from the sea.

My duty there was to act as liaison link between the Range Officer and the Mosquito Aeroplanes towing targets up and down the coastline. I was in the

base of a Control Tower, the Range Officer at the top, overlooking the gun range. Rather the pilots of the Mosquitos than me, but hopefully the Gunners were firing blanks.

Once a fortnight, there was a radar exercise. Six Spitfires would take off from Exeter, fly across up to Bristol, down the coast towards Tintagel and home again. I think these were civilian pilots enjoying the chance to fly their planes with a purpose. Bristol to Tintagel meant they had to pass over the gun range, the leader would call me on the radio to request that the range be closed while they passed overhead. This request I passed on to the Range Officer and, sure enough, the guns went silent and we hear, possibly see, the planes passing overhead.



BANG – one of the guns went off much to the consternation of the pilots. The Leader came

back to me over the radio and spoke to me in a language with which I was unfamiliar but the meaning was quite clear and I advised the Range Officer appropriately.

What happened? The standard procedure after a ceasefire is, if your gun still has a live round in it, is to fire it anyway. Why? The gun barrel will be hot from the previous firing and the fresh cordite in the newly loaded gun could possible ignite, causing the gun to go off which is what happened on this occasion.

Next day, after lunch, I took a walk along the cliff top. It was nice day, sunny and peaceful, not a care in the world then, suddenly, over the edge of the cliff, engine roaring so loudly, appeared a Spitfire, so close to me I felt I could have touched it. The shock of it knocked me to the ground. I'm convinced it was the leader of the Spitfires from the day before, seeking revenge for being shot at. He must have flown out to sea further up the coast, flown down until he was opposite the gunnery range and then come in, low over the sea so as not to be seen or heard, in towards the cliffs. I reckon he saw me strolling along the edge and used me as an aiming point. It wasn't even my gun.



He then went on to terrorise the camp before setting off back to Exeter and life returned to normal - hey ho!!!

Don Edwards

The Mosquito made by De Havilland and introduced during World War II, was a British twin-engined, multirole combat aircraft. It was unusual in that its airframes were constructed mostly of wood. In 1941, it was one of the fastest operational aircraft in the world. There were various types, e.g. Light Bomber, Fighter-bomber, Night fighter, Photo-reconnaissance etc. It was eventually replaced by the RAF in the 1950's with the Jet-powered English Electric Canberra. (Source Wikipedia).



Saved by the Bell

I'm old fashioned. I don't own a 'smart' phone, I appreciate their value to others but, in my hands, most things go wrong. We now have in our flat a plethora of "Open Reach" phones that can do things I never dreamed of and still have not fathomed.

Recently I was sitting in my chair, reading, at about seven in the evening when the phone rang. I answered the call from a D.C. from Hammersmith. He told me that they had arrested a man who gave my name and telephone number and had been misusing a 'cloned' credit card in my name. He said that the plain white card gave access to my bank account and that the man arrested claimed to be my grandson. I could dismiss that claim immediately; it could not possibly have been one of my four grandsons.

The caller asked me to check my credit cards. At this point, my wife took an initiative; "It's a scam; the caller is an impostor! How do we know who you are?"

The caller gave us his name, badge number and said he was from Hammersmith Police Station; he suggested that we should immediately call "999" and verify his claim. I closed the call and called "999".

At this point, another of our telephones rang. My wife answered the call, but got no answer. I then rang "999" and received the familiar reply asking which service we required; I asked for Police and a young lady confirmed that the previous call was indeed a scam that had been interrupted by the second blank call that we had received. This had interfered with the scammers trick of keeping the line open so that they could pretend to be "999" and falsely confirming that our original caller was indeed a genuine police officer.

We were at all times suspicious of what was being said but I was "saved by the bell" which must have broken into the scammers call.

Bill Whitman



u3a Ornithology and Botany visit to Kew gardens

Earlier this year the u3a O&B (Ornithology and Botany) group leader was approached



Chairman with a surprise request. A past member had left a bequest in her will to Bookham u3a. Sheila Manley was a member of O&B



by the



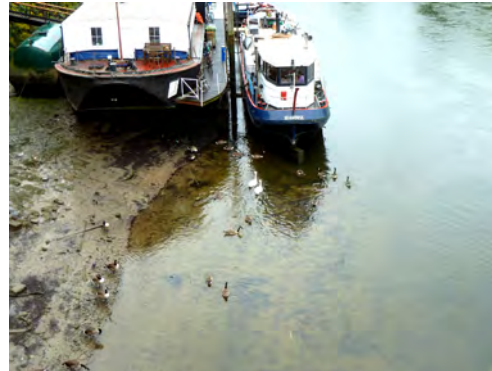
John Dicker

when long time leader John Dicker led a group which explored the local countryside for full days on a regular basis. She had enjoyed these events, and the Committee suggested that the current O&B group might make a subsidised outing to somewhere special. What could be more special than Kew Gardens? This



would be a fitting thank you to Sheila Manley, and a tribute to the excellent leadership that John Dicker provided for so many years. He had a good awareness of birds and their songs, plus an encyclopaedic knowledge of wild flowers. He would crouch down with his lens and explain the difference between two plants by whether their minute hairs pointed sideways or upwards! It was all done with his kindly smile and easygoing approach.

So one Tuesday in July we set off from Bookham station to Kew Bridge changing at Clapham Junction. At Kew Bridge we adopted the London Walks principle of a coffee stop. We went into an old coaching inn, the Express Tavern, just round the corner. The interior is decorated



with pictures and knick knacks from the past. There are candles in bottle holders where the wax has been allowed to drip down to

cover the outsides. The staff were friendly and helpful.

We headed across the Kew bridge over the Thames. Our ornithology was largely confined to peering over the bridge at the geese and swans and their young. We reached the Elizabeth Gate. Some of the group had particular plans, and headed off on their own. The remainder followed the leader, turning left. The path took us beside the kitchen garden where we had a look at the range of vegetables being grown and tested. The path then took us to the large rock garden where alpine plants were growing. Beyond that is the rather futuristic Davies Alpine House which led us to the Princess of Wales conservatory.

The conservatory was named after Princess Augusta, mother of George III who founded the gardens in 1759. Princess Diana opened it in 1987. I wonder if she was told which



Princess of Wales was being honoured? This glasshouse has ten different climate zones. We saw orchids, cacti and carnivorous plants. We were lucky to see a bromeliad



flowering for the first time in forty years and a Titan lily about to flower. These lilies are also known as corpse flowers because the flower exudes a powerful scent of rotting flesh to attract the insects who act as pollinators. In the pool, the giant lily pads floating above the water were most impressive.

Most O&B outings this year were accompanied by rain showers, including this one. We walked



back along the Great Broad walk with its colourful herbaceous borders to a restaurant where



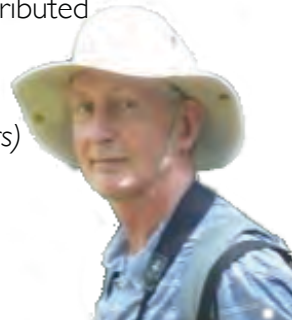
we surreptitiously ate our own lunches under cover. We had time in the afternoon to walk around the big lake and into the Palm house. Built in 1844 with over 16 thousand panes of glass, it is maintained as a tropical rainforest. We saw rubber trees, cocoa plants and different types of palms. In that conservatory there are plants which are examples of

valuable sources of fruit, timber, spices or medicines they produce.

We all met up again at the Elizabeth Gate and returned to Bookham. It was a day out suitable to mark the generosity of Sheila Manley and the long service John Dicker contributed to U3A O&B.

Tod Wilson

(photos by group members)



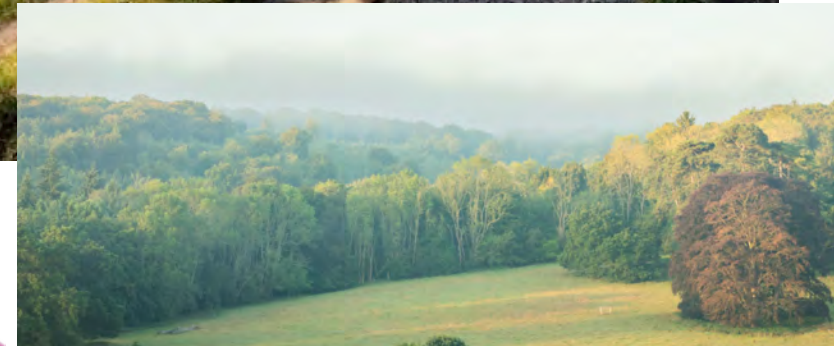
**The Easy Rambling Group
meets to walk twice a month.**

At the end of September we had a lovely morning walking around the outside of the Polesden Lacey estate, where we crossed the field, went through beautiful woodland, and saw spectacular



views over the North Downs. In one field a flock of healthy sheep grazed happily in the sun.

Our circular route took us back to Polesden Lacey.



Chris Edwards



Swingbridge Community Boats

Hilary and I arranged a canal boat trip upstream to Guildford for eight of our friends. We hired 'Tranquility' one of two boats owned by the Surrey Care Trust, a local charity that changes lives.



They help people of all ages overcome the disadvantages of low skills, financial hardship and social isolation. Surrey Care Trust run education, training, mentoring and volunteering

programmes, helping people to build skills for life, learning and work, enabling them to make a positive contribution to society.

Swingbridge run cruises on the River Wey from Dapdune Wharf throughout the spring,

summer and early autumn. This boat is specifically adapted with a wheelchair lift, so it is fully accessible to people with limited mobility.

Betty and along with Margaret, made use of this excellent facility.

We were welcomed on board by Geoff the Skipper, along with crew and members Angela and Dave and set off enjoying the soothing speed and tranquillity on water. We passed the old wharf buildings, under the bridge near the old Debenhams, which is now being taken down, and entered the lock at Millmead.

Geoff asked for volunteers to help the crew open and close the lock gates. Brian undertook to wind up the paddles and then Benita and Lee pushed the paddles open.

We set off for St Catherine's where we turned round to retrace our way back to Dapdune Wharf. Height restrictions of the





boat meant we couldn't carry on upstream. We enjoyed coffee and biscuits on our return trip.

Geoff and Dave gave us an interesting commentary about the River Wey and the Swingbridge ethos. 'Endeavour' is their second community boat. On Mondays they take clients who are carrying out Community Service and on Fridays, NHS clients. They derive enormous benefit by this facility, from learning

knots to steering the boat and clearing Himalayan Balsam.

The crew received a hearty round of applause after we moored up back at Dapdune Wharf and we look forward to going 'downstream' next year.

Several of our 'trippers' gave donations to which Surrey Care Trust sent me a lovely 'thank you' email. The crew are all volunteers, and it is expensive to upkeep the boats. For example, a hydraulic lift twice yearly certification costs £400.



They welcome bookings from all organisations such as nursing homes, youth organisations, societies and groups of friends.

See: swingbridgeboats.co.uk for further details.

Anita Laycock



A Polesden Surprise

It was a pleasant enough day in August as I wandered along the path by Polesden Lacey's beautiful rose garden. Looking over the hedges I saw an amazing sight. Groups of men and women wielding sticks and hitting coloured balls, one player concentrating very

I ventured down the steps just as the games were ending. Some players were making their way to a circle of chairs and remnants of what had been a picnic. Others crowded round a man who was busy adding up figures. I subsequently learned that he was



hard while trying to get the ball through a white arch, of which there were many. This was new to me and looked like fun. I had to find out more.

David Snow, the organiser who, after deliberations and double checking, was to announce the winners of what had been an all day competition.

People were very friendly to me and pleased to answer my many questions. The game was croquet, the sticks are mallets and the white arches are hoops. The post in the middle is called a centre peg and one form of the game is finished when a



players hits the peg with both balls and "pegs out". In another form of the game, the balls played follow the colours on the peg.

I learned a lot. This group of

players had been playing in an Association Croquet tournament and were part of a much larger group belonging to Bookham u3a. Other u3a groups and visitors also use the lawns, which are mowed and maintained by the much appreciated Polesden gardeners. A white lining rota of u3a members ensure that lawns are well marked. "When does the season end?" I asked and was told that this year they were going to play an extra week to bring it up to the end of September and that after a rainy season this had been a much welcomed bonus. I think I might sign up when the new season begins in April next year. They told me I can try it out first to see if I would like it. Beautiful venue, great game, lovely people, looks good to me!

Oh, and as for the winners of the competition, I did hear their names announced. Frank Cross, followed by his wife Val as runner up. First time a married couple have won apparently. She seemed rather excited.....

Ivor Escarels

Why I love French Impressionist painting more than all other forms of art

I was born in London but moved to Oxford when I was less than 2 years old because my father had got a job in hospital



Camille Pissarro

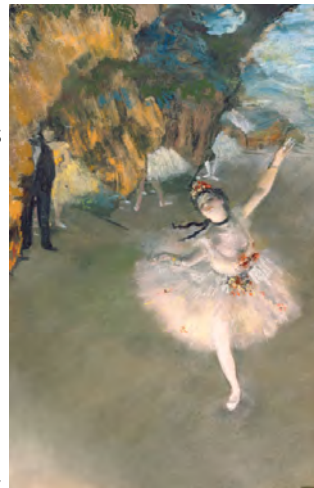
administration at the Radcliffe Infirmary in 1938. The whole family, (I was the youngest of 5), moved to a new rented house at Iffley, just 2 miles from the city centre. I lived there for the next 18 years until I went to do my National Service.

Oxford is a fine city and apart from the many beautiful colleges there are very many excellent museums, art galleries and music venues to see and enjoy. One of my favourite museums was the Pitt Rivers, named after a Victorian explorer and the big attraction to many was the exhibit of shrunken

human heads attached, I recall, to a waist belt. Each one of the several heads was about fist size and the explanation next to the exhibit gave the production methodology!

Another of the fine museums is the Ashmolean founded in the 1670s. The first public exhibition in the world contains all manner of interesting exhibits together with very many paintings including an extensive collection of the work of Camille Pissarro who lived in

London during the 1870s to avoid the Franco-Prussian war and siege of Paris. His son Lucian lived and eventually



Edgar Degas

died in England and when his widow looked for somewhere to house his vast collection of his, and his father's paintings the only gallery really interested was the Ashmolean. There were of course many other artists but it was the Pissarro's in particular that attracted me.

I also had a friend who lived in a



Berthe Morisot

large house in the Iffley Road and in their sitting room I can remember, looking from our hiding place under a grand piano, was a picture of a ballet dancer on the wall. I later found this was a Degas, probably in pastel (Degas used nothing but pastels for several years) I found that while I liked drawing and painting, my efforts were not particularly good and certainly didn't satisfy me so I turned to photography in the early 1950s. This appealed to me and kept me interested for very much of my life. I did all my black and white film processing for many years—there is little to beat the thrill of seeing an image you have photographed develop and appear in a dish of chemicals in front of you. I still occasionally tried to draw and paint in watercolours and go to exhibitions of paintings mainly in London. Art exhibitions I particularly remember were Picasso in the early 1960s, a Cezanne exhibition in the 1990s but it was a TV programme in the

2000s by Waldemar Januszczak who talked about French impressionists and he showed a painting by Berthe Morisot. He said this was never the work of an occasional painter "just



look at the swift brush strokes on the blouse". She must be the least known of the Impressionist painters. I go to as many

Claude Monet Impressionist exhibitions as I can here in England in Paris and Amsterdam and have recently seen an excellent exhibition of Berthe Morisot's work at the Dulwich Picture Gallery—at last she is being recognised for the very fine artist she so obviously always was.



Eduard Manet

Maurice Baker

Bookham u3a future events

The table below shows upcoming meetings open to all members. For more information on these meetings please refer to the Bookham u3a website. You will need to be logged in to see the additional information.

The monthly meetings always start at 2.30pm and are followed by tea and biscuits.

05 Nov	Mother of the Brontes	2.30pm
03 Dec	The Three Kings	2:30 pm

Study Days at Yehudi Menuhin School

Always on a Friday 10am to 4pm

Bring your own lunch

£12 u3a members

Fri 15 th Nov	Understanding Lowry: The Man, His Life & His Works Presented by Maria Chester, Arts Society Lecturer & Berwick Visual Arts Researcher
Fri 21 Feb 2025	Pioneering the NewSpace Revolution Presented by Professor Craig Underwood, Emeritus Professor of Spacecraft Engineering, University of Surrey
Fri 21 Mar	Exploring Johann Sebastian Bach's St Matthew Passion Presented by Sandy Burnett, Musical Director and Broadcaster